Climate Politics: Rotational Farming and Smog Crisis in the North of Thailand
Background

- Smog crisis in the northern part of Thailand (2006-2008)
  - Health problem
  - Economic problem

- Cause of problems (from govts)
  - The poor’s needs (collection of forest food/products – Ants’ eggs, mushrooms, etc.)
  - Burning of farming areas including rotational farming
    - Target indigenous highland communities
    - Link up with global warming issue

- Measures used by govt
  - imposition of strict rules and policies to ban/control all burning activities (including rice fields)

- Key point: using this case as a pretext to control highland’s rotational farming activity
Objectives

- Study the impact of smog crisis to IP communities that still practice rotational farming (selected 2 communities)
- IP responses
Main Impacts

- Ethnic prejudice
  - National security threat (living near borders hard to control)
  - Forest destroyers (practicing swidden agriculture)
  - Drug trafficking (grew opium)

- Government imposition of strict rules and control of burning activity
  - Issuance of laws and regulations
  - Delay in burning of rice fields affecting crop cycle
Responses

- Application of traditional knowledge
  - Traditional belief (fire regarded as god and be respected)
  - Fire control and management in rotational farming areas
    - Construction of fire break line
    - Burning technique

- Forest fire control and resource management by community
  - Construction of community forest fire break lines
  - Setting up rules
  - Control and put out forest fire

- Participation in provincial office’s policy formulation and implementation
  - Sub-committee to promote public participation (recovery of ecosystem, protection and solving smoke problem)
Recommendations

- Rotational farming system is not a main cause of global warming or smog crisis as it wrongly understood by many. On the contrary, this system has helped mitigating the impact of global warming through the land that has left fallow and let trees regenerate naturally. This system should be recognized and promoted by government agencies rather than seen it as a problem.

- Government or media should play more role in educating government officials and the general public in order to get rid of negative attitude towards highland communities which still practice rotational farming and to promote mutual understanding and cooperation in addressing the problem of global warming.

- Forestry Department should aware and recognize role of communities in protecting and conserving of forest particularly on controlling of forest fires through construction of fire break lines and putting out wild fire. They sacrifice both time and energy and sometimes get injured from fighting and controlling of forest fire.

- Traditional fire control system of villagers should be recognized and promoted as effective mean and local effort in controlling fire in rice fields.